

SPANISH TRACES



Volume 5

Spring 1999

No. 1

Las Vegas: 1999 Annual Meeting June 5 and 6

Join your OST colleagues in Las Vegas, Nevada on June 5 and 6 and an optional tour on June 7 for the 1999 National Conference. It promises to be a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the Mojave Desert segment of the trail.

Conference co-chairs Elizabeth von Till Warren and Col. Harold Steiner have developed an exciting conference program whose theme is "The Old Spanish Trail Mosaic – Cultural Landscapes of the Mojave Desert." The keynote speaker will develop the conference theme. The first view of the Mosaic is of the history of the entire Old Spanish Trail. The focus then narrows to the Mojave Desert as seen from the differing perspectives of the Native Americans, Mexican/New Mexicans, and the Euro-Americans. The third view describes one OST campsite, Las Vegas Springs, its history and its future. The final piece of our Mosaic includes Old Spanish Trail preservation and the necessary

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Commission Vice President Dr. Juan Gomez-Quiñones and OSTA President Dr. Charles Querfeld at the Dedication of the Old Spanish Trail Memorial Plaque at El Pueblo de Los Angeles Plaza

(Photograph courtesy of E. C. Querfeld.)

On January 14, 1999, a plaque commemorating the Old Spanish Trail was unveiled at its western terminus. The OSTA is deeply grateful to the Commission for El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, Los Pobladores 200, Kenn and Lorraine Carpenter and the many other individuals who made it possible to emplace this memorial. We owe an immense debt of gratitude to Jean Bruce Poole, Director of the History Division of El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, for her unceasing efforts in guiding this project to its completion.

NPS Feasibility Study Delayed

The National Park Service continues to make progress on the study of the Old Spanish Trail as a National Historic Trail, but the preliminary report is still three to six months away. Larry Beal, the Study Team Captain, has indicated that when the study is published there will be a ninety day period for written public comment. There will be no public hearings. Until the preliminary draft report is issued, there is little point in providing information to the Study Team. When the report becomes public we must all be prepared to provide a well-reasoned, written response.

Conversations with both Beal and David Gaines, Superintendent of the Long Distance Trails Group Office in Santa Fe, suggest that the OST is being held to a higher qualification standard than trails previously studied and that the OST is still not considered to be historically significant. Although this view may change before the preliminary report is issued, we should be prepared, nevertheless, to contest this view if it appears in the report. Beal notes that the language of the National Trails System Act states: "To qualify as nationally significant, historic use of the trail must have had a far reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture."

Chapter Development Opportunities

Our association made a great leap forward with the organization of the Southern California Chapter. Hats off to John Robinson and others for this wonderful addition to OSTA!

We anticipate that our national conference in Las Vegas NV in June will culminate in the development of a chapter in Nevada. Any volunteers to help make that anticipation a reality?

Our next targets are two chapters in Utah -- one on the east side in the Moab/Green River vicinity, and one on the west side in the Cedar City/St. George area. Ron Jewkes, our

national board member in Helper Utah, has agreed to assist in starting these two Utah chapters. If you are interested, please contact Ron at 435-472-0719, or write to him at 74 Bryner Street, Helper, UT 84526-1025.

Another near term goal is a southwestern Colorado chapter in the Durango/Pagosa Springs territory. Call or write to me, Willard Lewis, 505-984-2978, P. O. Box 6073, Santa Fe, NM 87502-6073 if you can help with this project.

Willard Lewis, Chair, Chapter Development Committee

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OSTA's efforts will help preserve one of America's great long distance trade routes and increase appreciation of the West's multi-cultural heritage. Please join us!

Membership Dues:

Institutional	\$25/year
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President's Corner

By Charles Querfeld

The outcome of the current National Park Service study of the OST as a candidate for National Historic Trail status remains unknown. Because of this uncertainty, thought must be given to alternative plans and partnerships to preserve, protect, and mark the OST. Most of the OST lies on public land much of which, perhaps eighty percent, is managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

Recently, Elizabeth Warren arranged a meeting with Stanton Rolf, District Archaeologist (and a co-author on an archaeology study of the OST in Nevada) at the BLM office in Las Vegas, Nevada. Rolf suggested that we implement a partnership agreement with the BLM now, rather than wait for the results of the NPS study.

I believe that this must be done. Many of today's visible traces of the OST lie in Nevada and California and a partnership with the BLM coordinated between these two states will be needed to preserve these few remaining traces. It will require a major effort with many volunteers needed. We may need to find grant money to make it work.

Frank Wheat's book *California Desert Miracle* is reviewed in this issue of *Spanish Traces*. Wheat's great insight on involvement with the federal government on a preservation project should be studied carefully. We in the OSTA may well be treated to our own lesson in applied civics. Please let me have your thoughts on this important matter.

The OST plaque is now in place at El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument (Olvera Street). Placing the plaque involved hard work by many people and some serious fund

raising. Kenn and Lorraine Carpenter raised the first cries for the plaque. These were clearly heard by the Director of the History Division at the Monument, Jean Bruce Poole. Mrs. Poole shepherded the plaque through the approval process required by the City of Los Angeles. Many individuals in the OST and Los Pobladores 200, an organization of descendants of original settlers in Los Angeles, contributed to the plaque. Letters of support were needed and were provided by Steve Madsen, the Carpenters and Drs. Tom Chavez, Joseph Sanchez and Robert Torrez in New Mexico. The plaque citation is written both in English and Spanish: Professor Antonio Lozano at the University of Colorado graciously provided the Spanish text. All of the participants and the Los Angeles Commission for the El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument have my deepest gratitude for their help and encouragement.

Forthcoming Issues of *Spanish Traces*:

Fall, 1999 ... This issue will be devoted to an examination of the National Significance of the Old Spanish Trail as defined in the legislation that underlies the National Historic Trail System. Section 5(b)(11) of the National Trails System Act states:

- (A) It must be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant as a result of that use.
- (B) It must be of national significance with respect to any of several broad facets of American history, such as trade and commerce, exploration, migration and settlement, or military campaigns. To qualify as nationally significant, historic use of the trail must have had a far reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture. Trails significant in the history of Native Americans may be included.

Consider this note as a call for papers on this general topic. Please let the editor know if you intend to submit an article. Submissions should be in the editor's hands by August 1, 1999. The issue should appear about September 1, 1999.

Spring, 2000 ... This issue will be devoted to the military use of the Old Spanish Trail. Even though most military use occurred after commercial traffic on the Old Spanish Trail dwindled, it is, nevertheless, part of the trail's history and deserves our attention. This issue should appear about March 1, 2000.

Chapter Reports

Mesa County

The North Branch Chapter membership has devoted the past two years to working with a coalition of community groups to erect a statue dedicated to pioneer women. This project is now ready for its grand finale. The bronze statue, about twelve feet high including pedestal, will be unveiled and dedicated on May 8, 1999 at 1:30 p.m. Because its permanent site is not complete, the statue will be placed temporarily at Cross Orchard History Farm, in Grand Junction, until the permanent Eagle Rim Park site is ready.

A grand celebration is being planned. Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell has been invited to give us an update on the latest legislation pertaining to the status of the Old Spanish Trail. We have invited other state and congressional legislators, park service personnel, local dignitaries, descendants of local pioneer families, and all those interested in trails or history. There is no cost: the party should last until 5:00 p.m. Y'all Come! See the unveiling of "Spirit of Pioneer Women."

In cooperation with the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and other coalition members, we are preparing to place a marker at the "Crossing of the Grand." This historically significant site lies at the Colorado River ford in Grand Junction. This is one of the few places the river can be crossed and is well documented by Old Spanish Trail travelers. We now have the historic background, the property owners permission, funding for a bronze plaque, ideas for the inscrip-

tion, the blessing of county and are now awaiting a few other "red tapers." We must recognize and preserve significant sites of this kind before developers destroy them. As an aside; developers become quite cooperative once they are aware of a site's historic significance — it's a selling point for them. Hope to see you in Vegas!

Jack Nelson, President
Grand Junction, Colorado

Salida del Sol

The New Mexico Salida del Sol Chapter had its biggest attendance ever for its February program meeting. Fifty people heard Robert Shlaer discuss "The Central Route to the Pacific: The Daguerreotypes of Fremont's Fifth Expedition." Shlaer is a professional daguerreotypist who replicated images taken by Fremont's daguerreotypist, Solomon Nunes Carvalho, on the 1853-54 expedition. Fremont followed the North Branch of OST through the San Luis Valley of southern Colorado, over Cochetopa Pass, and into the Gunnison River country. Shlaer's work will be exhibited next year at the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe. The Museum of New Mexico Press will publish Shlaer's accompanying book.

A joint program meeting with the End of the Trail Chapter of the Santa Fe Trail Association will be held in the Eldorado Community Center outside Santa Fe on March 20. Dr. Bart Barbour, a National Park Service historian, will portray "John Hatcher, Mountain Man" in costume. Hatcher was a longtime employee of the Bents at Bents Fort, and a great storyteller. This program

is partially funded by the New Mexico Endowment for the Humanities.

A final Spring 1999 program meeting and chapter annual meeting will be held before the June national conference, with a subject to be announced.

Willard Lewis, President
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Saguache County

We began the year by revising our by-laws to conform with the 501(c)(3) tax exemption requirements. Only a few minor changes were necessary. We are now under the tax-exempt umbrella of the OSTNA.

Our Program Committee has been busy lining up a series of very interesting field trips and speakers with at least one event every month through November. We are still concentrating on finding signs of the North Branch on the west side of Cochetopa Pass and the continental divide in Saguache County. Field trips are planned in June to the Wade Collins Ranch and in September to the cut off from Hwy 114 north to Doyleville for further sleuthing in that area.

OSTNA president Charles Querfeld and wife Judy, have done a great job keeping us informed on current happenings. Although the National Park Service OST Study Team insists they have not found convincing evidence that the OST has "National Historic significance," we remain committed to searching for, promoting, and signing the one-hundred plus miles of the East and West Forks of the North Branch. Perseverance is our motto. We remain staunch "Trail Fanatics."

Yvonne Halburian, President
Saguache, Colorado

Southern California Chapter

Greetings from the newly formed Southern California Chapter of the OSTA. Our chapter was born at dinner at the Mission Inn, Riverside, CA, on October 27, 1998. We decided at our founders' meeting that the best way to get the our Chapter off and running was to schedule a series of programs, four or five a year, to entice people to join and become actively involved in OSTA. As of February 1, we have 27 members and are still growing.

Our first program was held jointly with the Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum on Saturday, March 13. Paul Spitzzeri, Collections Coordinator at the Homestead Museum and a founding member of the Southern California chapter of the Old Spanish Trail Association presented, "Emigrants on the Old Spanish Trail." The program was a thumping success. With limited seating capacity for ninety persons, many were turned away.

Our second program will be an all-day auto tour, with stops at historic sites in Cajon Pass, led by Nick Cataldo of San Bernardino Valley College, on Saturday, April 17. Breakfast is at 8 a.m. and the tour begins at 9 a.m. This will be an auto tour with frequent stops and several short walks. You won't want to miss this extremely informative and interesting visit to one of Southern California's historical gateways.

Our third program will be the "Agua Mansa History Tour" led by R. Bruce Harley, recently retired as Archivist of the San Bernardino Diocese, scheduled for Saturday, May 15. Dr. Harley has written

extensively on this historic community, the first in the San Bernardino Valley, founded by pioneers from New Mexico in 1843. We will meet at 9 a.m. for breakfast and orientation at Carrows.

The Old Spanish Trail plaque was successfully installed and dedicated on January 14. Several of us worked long and hard to see this historic marker, inscribed in both English and Spanish, placed in the Plaza of El Pueblo de Los Angeles, the western terminus of the Old Spanish Trail.

John Robinson, Chairman
Fullerton, California

William Workman Chapter

The Annual General Meeting of the William Workman Chapter of the Old Spanish Trail Association was held 31 January, 1999 at Cross Keys Inn, Tebay, Cumbria, England. The Cross Keys Inn, a 400 year old former coaching inn, purports to be haunted by the resident ghost of witch Mary Baines. President John Sharpe called the meeting to order after members had enjoyed a hearty Sunday lunch.

The William Workman Chapter was accepted as the 1st International Chapter of OSTA with John Sharpe as President and David Fallowfield Secretary-Treasurer. The Chapter has been working on family history research after being approached by U.S. Judges Workman and Furman for help with this research. This led to stories of the brothers, David and William Workman, who left Clifton near Penrith for America in the nineteenth century. David subsequently employed Kit Carson as an apprentice and William lead a party of settlers overland on the OST from

New Mexico to California in 1841. Following up this history, led us to the Kit Carson Museum in Taos where we learned about the OSTA.

All chapter members responded to the National Park Service OST Feasibility Study in February. The draft Bylaws for Chapters were received from national OSTA, read, amended to delete references to U.S. Revenue legislation, and adopted.

John Sharpe, President
Cumbria, England

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The Old Spanish Trail:

A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

by Colonel Harold A. Steiner, USAF (Ret)

Solo un Poco más allá!

This illusive phrase lured greedy Spaniards onward and onward to a small Indian village of mud, stick and stone in what is now central Kansas. The arrogance and cruelty that were the hallmark of the Spanish Conquistadors did not end with the conquest of the Aztecs and Incas. The Indians along Coronado's route received the same Spanish greetings and they quickly learned they could rid themselves of the hated Spanish if they dangled the golden carrot before their nose. The riches were always, "*Solo un Poco más allá!*" -- a little further.

The year was 1541, and the Seven Golden Cities of Cibola never materialized. Coronado's great adventure that had begun with high hopes was a failure. The fabulous cities of gold and jewels were a myth.

Although Coronado's quest was a failure, the seeds of the Old Spanish Trail had been sown. The fertile river valleys in what would become southern Arizona and New Mexico were golden carrots of a different kind. The common people wanted arable land; the Church wanted converts. Colonists and priests followed the footsteps of Coronado northward and by the 17th century the territory was designated the *Provincia de Nuevo Méjico* and a provincial capitol was founded at Santa Fe. By the 18th century, despite isolation and periodic trouble with the Indians, the province was politically stable and was a productive part of the Viceroy of New Spain.

In the Far West, Spanish incursions into what would become California did not go as well or as quickly. At the same time Coronado and his lieutenants were opening the route to Sonora and New Mexico, Spanish sea captains were exploring the Pacific coast as far north as Oregon. But there was no impetus for colonization. In essence, the vast area of New Spain from the Pacific coast to New Mexico remained as it had been -- the *Tierra Incógnita del Norte*.

The one constant in geopolitics is change and nascent changes were stirring that would impact the whole western world, particularly the Spanish holding in western North America.

What the Spanish were failing to do in the lands they claimed, others would do for them. Russians were moving down from Alaska into what is now British Columbia and the British were intruding into Spanish claimed territory in what would become Washington and Oregon. And far to the east in Philadelphia a bell was ringing that was the harbinger of a nation that would be a far more invasive intruder into Spanish territory.

These incursions did not go unnoticed. To counter these moves, Spain adopted a more extensive colonization policy and the Church led the way. The first mission in *Alta California* was founded in San Diego in 1769. For the next half century, the Franciscans pressed northward and twenty-one missions were founded along the California coast. The missions served as nuclei for coloni-

zation and as a buffer against foreign incursions. To establish secular control, the land was designated the *Provincia de California* with a provisional capitol at the Presidio at Monterey. All the elements were now in place that dictated the need for an Old Spanish Trail.

By 1776, there were two widely separated spheres of Spanish influence in the Great Southwest. Faster and more reliable communications were needed between the two provinces and the concept of an overland route between Santa Fe and Monterey seemed a simple solution. But, there were great differences - both literally and figuratively - between concept and reality. The caprices of geology had erected physical barriers that few men had encountered before. Also the native people had quickly learned of Spanish arrogance and they too established barriers that precluded a direct route for the much-needed overland road.

The Spanish Empire was a Catholic country and the Church wielded tremendous power and it played a prominent role in exploration. Dedicated padres moved into the *Tierra Incógnita del Norte* - the unknown land to the North -- with two missions - to convert heathens and to explore. It was not always clear which mission was dominant.

Father Francisco Garcés was one of the dedicated priests who traveled up the Colorado River to the villages of the Mojave Indians. These Native Americans had been using old Indian trails for centuries to travel across

the Mojave Desert to the Pacific Ocean to trade with the coast Indians. They shared this knowledge with Garcés and, in 1776, he became the first known non-Indian to travel from the Colorado River to the Pacific and return. His explorations blazed what would become known as the western sector of Old Spanish Trail.

At the same time other Spanish padres were poised to play an important role in finalizing the Old Spanish Trail. In Santa Fe, Fathers Dominguez and Escalante were given permission and resources to fulfill the age-old dream of finding an overland route to California. With high hopes, in July 1776, they departed on the great adventure. They opted to follow a circuitous route northward to avoid the hostile Indians and formidable terrain west of Santa Fe.

Years earlier, Indians from the Northwest had blazed a trail across Utah into New Mexico that they used for various trade purposes not the least of which was the nefarious practice of slavery. In 1765, a secular Spanish explorer named Juan Rivera had successfully explored and verified this Indian trail from Santa Fe to the crossing of the Colorado River near present Moab.

Whereas Father Garcés in the West had successfully befriended, listened to and taken the advice of the Indians, Dominguez and Escalante took a more self-centered view. Escalante was aware of Rivera's exploration and verification of the Indian slave trail and knew it could shorten their quest; but, for reasons still not fully understood, they did not exploit this information. Instead they diverged and took a long circuitous, time-consuming route across Colorado and northern Utah that brought them to the onset of winter. With mixed feelings they abandoned their quest

and returned to Santa Fe.

It can be said that Dominguez and Escalante blazed the eastern sector of what became the Old Spanish Trail but their contribution was not as positive as Father Garcés. The major importance of their effort was to prove that non-Indians could successfully travel great distances across the deserts and mountains north and west of New Mexico into the Great Basin.

The next major player would enter from center stage. Jedediah Strong Smith was an enterprising partner of a successful fur trading company and in 1826 he left the trappers rendezvous in Cache Valley, Utah to find more profitable fur markets on the Pacific coast.

Smith and his party pushed southward to Utah Lake near where Escalante and his party had tarried with the Ute Indians fifty years earlier. Although Smith deviated into the Wasatch Mountains scouting for virgin trapping territory, he essentially paralleled Escalante's route southward and finally merged with Escalante's trace near present Cedar City, Utah. From there he left the Great Basin and descended into the Virgin River valley and thence into the heart of the Mojave Desert. After an exhausting journey, Smith and his party reached the Mojave Villages on the Colorado River. From there they trod the same path Father Garcés had taken fifty years earlier and safely reached Los Angeles.

Now all the elements of the visionary overland route from Santa Fe to the Coast were in place. Smith had proven that non-Indians could traverse the hostile Mojave Desert and had paved the way for other trappers and traders to refine the trace. By 1829 all the bits and pieces had come together and the Old Spanish Trail was finally a reality

that would join the annals of other historic trails that were instrumental in building America.

Historically, the tenure of the Old Spanish Trail was brief. When Mexico ceded the Southwest to the United States the need for a 1200-mile arduous overland trail from Santa Fe to Los Angeles became moot and the trace from Santa Fe across the Colorado Plateau was gradually reclaimed by nature. But the part of the Trail that crossed the Mojave Desert survives as a recognizable segment of the Old Spanish Trail to this day primarily because of wagon traffic.

The question invariably arises - how do we know a wagon trace truly represents the Old Spanish Trail? A plausible answer requires an understanding of both the Mojave Desert and trail philosophy.

The Mojave Desert bruises easily and heals slowly and, whereas the caravan trail was transitory, a wagon trail could last forever. No trail across desert country is sacrosanct. The concept was to travel safely across the desert from one watering place to the next watering place. The mule drivers blazed a trace that achieved this objective most effectively for caravans. Remnants of the mule trail still exist and can be seen today.

In 1848, the Mormons drove the first wagon over the trace of the Old Spanish Trail across the Mojave Desert and proved it could be used as an all-weather route from Salt Lake to Los Angeles. This knowledge quickly prompted the Mormons to become the earliest travelers and fortunately they kept diaries that made frequent references to traveling on the "*... known and comparatively safe Old Spanish Trail.*" Obviously, they tried to stay as close to the proven caravan route as

possible. But mules could go where wagons could not follow. Thus, it was predestined that the Old Spanish Trail would become divergent to satisfy the needs of wagon' travelers. It was logical, therefore, to search for the *oldest* wagon trace and, when found, determine if it fit the philosophy of the Old Spanish Trail trace across the desert. The adjective "oldest" is emphasized because after 1850 a rapidly expanding network of roads was built to connect various ranching and mining enterprises and some of these roads impacted the trace of the Old Spanish Trail.

Old roads or trails, regardless of where they lead, invariably invoke the mystic of history. Frank Waters recognized this when he wrote, "*All trails are inconsequential without their travelers.*" Few can stand in the middle of the Appian Way and not visualize Roman chariots or hear the tramp of Roman legions. Likewise, few can stand in the middle of a trace of the Old Spanish Trail and not feel an affinity with those who traveled this route in the past.

Where are we today? For almost half a century *aficionados* have explored the Old Spanish Trail across the Mojave Desert and it has been researched, mapped, marked and refined until the trace can be trod with a high degree of confidence. To shunpikers, who like to stop and read the words and smell the flow-ers, the Trail evokes the romance of history and it becomes alive.

We see rocky mountain passes where the hoofs of the pack animals have worn an indelible path in the rocky soil. On this part of the Trail one has only to close the eyes to hear me-
 lodic, passionate shouts of the Spanish muleskinners echoing from the hills as they urge their stubborn charges ever onward.

We see desert valleys where one can

stand in the middle of the Trail and see the faint outline of its trace curve through creosote bush and bursage towards the far horizon. In our imagination, the creak of the wagons and shouts of the Mormon drivers echo over this part of the Trail.

There are areas of shale and siltstone where the hoofs of oxen and the iron rims of wagon wheels wore ruts that have eroded so deeply that today's four-wheel drive vehicles would have difficulty in following the trace. No sounds of joy are heard here. The hazards of early travel are manifest as we hear the agonizing pleas of the drivers as they urged their tired, foot-sore oxen over the unreceptive terrain.

All of these manifestations of sight and sound makeup the Old Spanish Trail that crossed the Mojave Desert. Today, this Old Spanish Trail is as real as it was yesterday and its legacy has been passed on for others to enjoy.

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Armijo's Trace Revisited

by Elizabeth von Till Warren

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In their important monograph, *Old Spanish Trail: Santa Fé to Los Angeles*, Leroy R. and Ann W. Hafen [1] included a translation of Antonio Armijo's diary that documented the first trading caravan from Santa Fé to Los Angeles. The Hafens interpreted the Armijo diary to reconstruct and locate the Armijo route so that this historically important trace could take its rightful place in the history of the Old Spanish Trail. Much of the Hafens' analysis of this historic route fits well with the diary entries – especially the segment between Abiquiu, New Mexico and the Virgin River in Utah. The Hafens' interpretation of Armijo's route along the Virgin and thereafter to the west through the Mojave Desert, however, is less positive because the Hafen reconstruction does not fit the diary entries as well. A comparison between Armijo's diary entries and the topography of the region should result in a stronger interpretation of the probable Armijo trace.

East of the Virgin River the Hafens' route is accepted as substantially correct. This portion of the route travelled west-northwest from Abiquiu and generally followed the Colorado-New Mexico and Arizona-Utah borders to the Crossing of the Fathers. From there in southern Utah, the caravan moved along the

north bank of the Colorado, crossing the Virgin and its tributary, the Santa Clara. They returned to the Virgin by following the "river of the little cornfields" (the Santa Clara River) to its confluence with the Virgin. The portion of Armijo's journey on which this article is focused begins with his arrival at this junction. From this point on, Armijo blazed a new trail. The interpretation in this article differs from that of the Hafens' with regard both to the route and to its significance.

The Armijo party came down the Virgin River (identified as the Sevier in the diary) at an extremely slow pace. The caravan moved slowly, waiting to rendezvous with the vanguard, which left to reconnoitre from the Christmas (1829) camp on the Virgin. When the parties reunited on New Year's Eve, Rafael Rivera did not come in. He had gone on alone, apparently to scout the distance to the Colorado River ford at the Mojave Indian villages near Needles, California. What of his trip can be surmised by comparing Rivera's report with the terrain?

Armijo's diary (January 7, 1830) notes that Rivera had travelled from California to Sonora in 1828. At that time there were only two routes he could have used: (1) via the Anza-Borrego Desert and the Gila River

crossing of the Colorado, or (2) via the Mojave River, crossing the Colorado at the Mohave villages near Needles. Garcés pioneered the Mojave River route as early as 1776, but in 1830 the Spanish knew it mainly as an invasion route frequented by thieves. This trail was rediscovered by Jedediah Smith in 1826. Armijo's journal entry about Rivera's trip is ambiguous. Armijo reported that Rivera recognized the Colorado crossing used on his earlier trip. Time (13 days round trip) and distance mitigate against Rivera's having used any but the Mohave village crossing. Armijo reported that Rivera had found the Hayata (Mojave) and the Cucha Payuche (probably Chemehuevi Paiute) Indians. Both tribes lived near the Mohave crossing of the Colorado.

On January 7, 1830, Rivera rejoined Armijo along the Colorado River at the mouth of Las Vegas Wash. From where Rivera left Armijo on the Virgin to Needles and back to this point is a 300-400 mile journey. This would be just about right for the amount of time he used if he maintained a relatively high average of travelling thirty miles per day. The Hafens assumed that Rivera actually scouted the Amargosa River route, but this assumption is not consonant with the time needed to travel the distance to the Amargosa and return. It is most probable that Rivera determined the difficulty of travelling along the Nevada side of the Colorado to Needles and decided against this route in favor of a cross-country one if water could be found at intervals in the desert. Both the Mohaves and the Paiute knew of such water holes, and it seems likely

that Rivera inquired as to other desert water sources. He determined that the Amargosa River was at a reasonable distance from Las Vegas Wash, and that it would eventually bring him to the Mojave River.

How certain is it that the Armijo party travelled up the Las Vegas Wash and not another? There are several clues in the Armijo journal, which logically lead to the conclusion that it was indeed the Las Vegas Wash. First, Armijo could have travelled along the Colorado from the Virgin only as far as the northern end of Boulder Canyon. To avoid this impassable stretch, the most likely route was to head inland (northwest) up Boulder Wash to Pinto Valley and Callville Wash. The Colorado is then reached again by travelling down Callville Wash to Callville Valley, then a broad grassy valley that would shelter men and animals for the two days Armijo rested along the river (January 4 and 5, 1830) while a reconnaissance party went out to look for Rivera. From here the trip to Las Vegas Wash is an easy day's journey. Below this point the Colorado is constricted by Black Canyon.

Furthermore, on January 7, one day's journey from his resting spot upstream, Armijo stopped at "Yerba del Manso Arroyo." Yerba del Manso is a medicinal herb well known to Spanish medicine[2][3]. It grows only in wet, alkaline, boggy places, commonly around seeps and springs or along the banks of intermittent streams. Las Vegas Wash is the only wash below the mouth of the Virgin that fits this description. Conditions in neither Boulder Wash nor

Callville Wash are fit for this herb: it does not grow in either. Armijo must have travelled up Las Vegas Wash to begin his epochal foray into the Mojave Desert wilderness. Where did it lead the caravan and what route choices did it offer?

From Las Vegas Wash, on January 9, 1830, Armijo's journal notes that he proceeded to a "Salty arroyo" (arroyo Salado), that is, to a salty, intermittent watercourse. Just southwest of the southern tip of the Sunrise Mountains, the main stream in Las Vegas Wash is joined by a tributary intermittent stream called Duck Creek. This stream is spring-fed near Whitney Mesa, but it also provides drainage for waters falling on the Black Mountain Range, the southeastern rim of the Las Vegas Valley. It is quite salty above Whitney Mesa. It is the most logical route west and south for a caravan coming up Las Vegas Wash.

A day's journey from the Colorado River would bring Armijo to the Whitney Mesa – Paradise Valley section of Las Vegas Valley. From here, the topography of the valley makes it impossible to see the major spring site later known as Las Vegas Springs. They lie at an elevation some 300 feet higher and seven miles northwest from Armijo's probable campsite near Stevens Spring on Duck Creek. Even from the top of Whitney Mesa, Armijo could not have seen them.

On January 10, 1830 Armijo's journal reports that he was at a playa, a "lake without water," a dry lake. Many dry lakes surround Las Vegas Valley, but unlike most of

Nevada, there are none in the valley itself. There are two dry lakes found a day's journey from the "Salty arroyo" in the right direction: Hidden Valley and Jean. The topography of this portion of Las Vegas Valley led him closer to Jean Dry Lake than Hidden Valley, using approximately the same route as the old Los Angeles highway, former U.S. 91. Armijo probably headed for the broad alluvial fan extending toward Duck Creek from the Black Mountains.

Leaving the dry lake, on January 11 Armijo arrived at the "Little Spring of the Tortoise." Study of the terrain covered and the obstacles to travel in this area indicates that Armijo probably spent the night at a dry camp near the western edge of the playa. The next day, pressed for water, he headed up the inviting alluvial fan that trends westward into the Spring Mountains. This fan, now Goodsprings Valley, opens near present-day Jean, Nevada at the southern end of Jean Dry Lake. A day's journey of about 15 miles would have brought Armijo from about 3000 to about 3700 feet altitude at an excellent spring in the middle of Goodsprings Valley. Apparently Armijo found a desert tortoise at the spring.

The following day, Armijo was at the "pass without water," probably some fifteen to twenty five miles from Goodsprings, if he tried to go far enough to find water. This would take him over the Spring Mountains at last, via either Wilson's or Columbia pass, and down a long slope toward the distant, as yet unknown, springs bordering California and Nevada, across the Nopah Range.

Armijo's dry camp on January 12 was probably near Black Butte, a landmark on the Nevada side of the border, near the divide between the Mesquite and Pahrump valleys. Each of these valleys has its own dry lake. The dry pass of Armijo could well have been at the divide between these two.

Another day's march would bring Armijo through Emigrant Pass across the Nopah Range, later to become the Spanish Trail route across these mountains. This march would bring him to the life-saving salty springs now known as Resting Springs. Finally, travelling either west or southwest, Armijo would have shortly reached the Amargosa River, his "River of the Payuches," a watercourse dotted with settlements of Paiutes and Shoshonis in both historic and prehistoric times [4]. Here, probably in the vicinity of China Ranch with its nearby sweet springs, Armijo found the first village of Indians since leaving the Moapa band of Paiutes along the Virgin River near Mesquite, Nevada.

Two days later, Armijo's caravan arrived at the "Saltpeter River," today's Salt Creek. The reconnaissance party made contact with the main body of the caravan at this point, the first meeting since parting from Armijo at Las Vegas Wash on January 8th. The caravan turned south along Salt Creek and travelled another day without water. On the 18th of January, they arrived at the "lake of the miracle." This is a curious appellation for a lake in a region where there are only dry lakes. Perhaps it was so named because it had water in it. In all this region of the virtually waterless



Map used, with permission, from unpublished thesis of Elizabeth von Till Warren.

Mohave Desert, the dry lake most frequently wet is known today as Silver Lake, north of Baker, California. Silver Lake is the lower of two playas fed by the Mojave River, which rises in the San Bernardino Mountains. Because the river drains these high mountains, Silver Lake may be wet when other dry lakes remain dry. Ephemeral lakes of this type in this area are Red Pass Lake, Drinkwater Lake and Nelson Lake. Silurian Dry Lake, north of Silver Lake, has not had water in it since the Pleistocene[5]. Although the two Cronese Dry Lakes are also fed by overflow from the Mojave River, they are two to three days' travel from Armijo's January 17, 1830 stop, which was near Riggs Wash on the Salt Creek – Silurian Dry Lake drainage. Cronese Lakes did not play a role in Armijo's travels.

Was rainfall in the winter of 1829 – 1830 sufficient that Silver Lake and other dry lakes in the area could

have had standing water? Although there are no weather records for this era, the crop records of San Gabriel Mission in southern California can serve as a proxy. In 1828 the yield (bushels harvested/bushels of seed planted) for grains and vegetables was 28.6 bushels per bushel, a banner year. In 1829 and 1830 the yields were respectively 7.0 and 21.2. 1830 was thus less productive than 1828, but there was sufficient rainfall for a good crop, and for the prospect of water in the Mojave River sinks, Soda Lake and Silver Lake.

Silver Lake holds water because its outlet channel is thirty feet higher than the lake bed[6]. Water flows into Silver Lake from Soda Lake through a constricted outlet at Baker. Soda Lake is the prime recipient of Mojave River flood waters, but rarely holds water in the lake bed, since the outlet channel at Baker is lower than the lake bed and drains

rather quickly. Soda Lake, however, is a discharging playa whose ground water table lies near its surface[7]. Although such lakes are boggy and impede travel, they do promise water to the thirsty traveler. Armijo may have followed the borders of this lake seeking springs or more important water sources that would cause the wet and muddy surface of this lake. A natural path leads up the drainage channel to Soda Lake from Silver Lake, and would lead Armijo to several spring areas at the south end of Soda Lake, about a day's journey from his camp by the "lake of the miracles." Armijo's diary tells us that one day's journey from that lake, he camped at the "little spring of the badlands."

Hafen has interpreted this camp to be at Bitter Springs, and the dry lake as Red Pass Lake[8]. Although these localities are possible interpretations of Armijo's route, the author believes that the Soda Springs route fits the topography more accurately because Silver Lake is more likely to contain water and provide the "miracle." The "malpais" described by Armijo can be translated as either lava beds or badlands. There are many volcanic outcrops near both Bitter Spring and Soda Springs but neither spring erupts in these lava beds. Soda Springs erupt directly from the east side of an eroded, dark brown, limestone hill at the southwest tip of Soda Lake[9][10]. Bitter Spring surfaces in a wash that runs between a lava butte and a hill to the east[11]. "Malpais" describes either site.

The next day's march ended in another dry camp. Since both Bitter Spring and Soda Springs are a day's

march from the Mojave River channel, Armijo probably travelled slowly or circuitously toward the river. If he followed up the drainage from Soda Playa to the river channel, he would cross an alluvial fan, almost twelve miles long and four miles wide, that extends from Afton Canyon to Soda Lake [12][13].

If Armijo went to Bitter Spring and then to the Mojave River, he would probably come to the channel about a day's journey above the end of Afton Canyon at Baxter. Since it cannot be determined precisely where Armijo's eighth day on the river ended in San Bernardino Canyon on January 28th, either of these two routes could have been used. Armijo called the stream the "arroyo of the Hayatas" (Mohaves) and noted that at the head or end of it, the trail from "Moqui" joins. Rivera probably recognized this river and noted that it was a long-used Indian trail. Once at San Bernardino, Armijo had reached an outpost of Mexican civilization, and three days later he reached San Gabriel Mission.

Armijo thus demonstrated that a trade route to California from New Mexico was practicable. The route he pioneered, however, was an arduous one that tempted only a few hardy caravan leaders during the next decade. Armijo did not report Las Vegas Springs. The route he blazed lacked these extensive meadowlands used by later travelers, and it included more dry camps. The course of the Old Spanish Trail evolved over time,

incorporating other route segments that eased travel.

Endnotes.

- [1] Elizabeth von Till Warren, "Armijo's Trace Revisited: A New Interpretation of the Impact of the Antonio Armijo Route of 1829-1830 on the Development of the Old Spanish Trail" (unpublished thesis, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1974).
- [2] Leroy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Old Spanish Trail: Santa Fe to Los Angeles* (Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1954).
- [3] Edward K. Balls, *Early Uses of California Plants* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970).
- [4] L. M. Curtin, *Healing Herbs of the Upper Rio Grande* (Santa Fe: Laboratory of Anthropology, 1947).
- [5] Isabel T. Kelly, "Southern Paiute Bands," *American Anthropologist* 36 (1934).
- [6] David G. Thompson, "The Mohave Desert Region, California," *USGS Water-Supply Paper* No. 578, 1929.
- [7] Thomas Ore and Claude N. Warren, "Late Pleistocene-Early Holocene Geomorphic History of Lake Mojave, California," *Geological Society of America Bulletin*, Vol. 82, September 1971, pp. 2553-67.
- [8] Thompson, *Op. cit.*, p. 559-60.
- [9] Hafen and Hafen, *Op. cit.*, p. 168.
- [10] Thompson, *Op. cit.*, p. 530.
- [11] Dennis Casebier, *Carleton's Pah-Ute Campaign* (Norco, California: Dennis G. Casebier, 1972) has good photographs of this portion of the Mojave River route, and descriptions of Soda Springs, now the site of the California Desert Consortium's study center at Zzyzx.
- [12] Thompson, *Op. cit.*, p. 546.
- [13] *Ibid.*, p. 516.
- [14] Casebier, *Op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

The Old Spanish Trail: MOJAVE RIVER TO CAJON PASS

by John W. Robinson

The course followed by Western trails often changed over time, as shorter, easier routes were discovered and used. Prime examples are the Hudspeth Cutoff on the California Trail and the Cimarron Cutoff on the Santa Fe Trail, both of which shortened the distance traveled by many miles. The same process undoubtedly took place on the Old Spanish Trail from Santa Fe to Los Angeles.

It appears very possible that the route of the Old Spanish Trail near its western end—between the Mojave River and Cajon Pass—underwent similar change as succeeding trade caravans, anxious to reach Los Angeles, sought shorter, more direct ways to complete their journey.

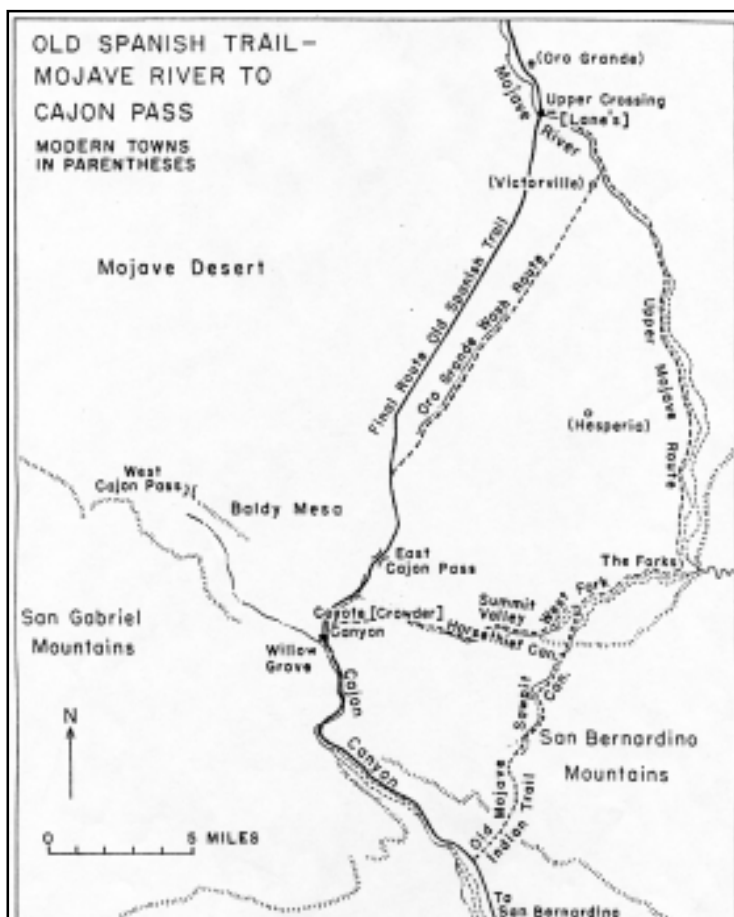
Unfortunately, the traders from Santa Fe had no Josiah Gregg, chronicler of the Santa Fe Trail, to describe for posterity their daily travels and adventures. None of the annual trade caravans kept a daily log that detailed their exact route. For most of the caravans, their arrival in Los Angeles was duly noted by the local authorities, and this remains the primary source of information regarding the annual treks. These local reports list the woolen goods brought from New Mexico, but say nothing that would help determine the route of travel.

Antonio Armijo, the Santa Fe merchant who led the first trade caravan over the Old Spanish Trail to Los Angeles in 1829-30, did keep a log, but it is too vague to ascertain his precise route from the upper Mojave River to “Cañon de San Bernardino,” undoubtedly Cajon Pass and Canyon. It should be noted that Cajon Pass is not at the head of the Mojave River, but some eight miles to the west. Armijo’s log, during

this final part of the long journey, is terse: “January 23 - We ate a horse; January 24 - Ditto; January 25 - Ditto; January 26 - Ditto, we ate a mule.” [1]

It seems likely that, never having been to Los Angeles, Armijo’s caravan followed the ancient well-trod Mojave Indian Trail up to the Forks, at the northern base of the San Bernardino Mountains, then turned up the West Fork to Summit Valley, as had Francisco Garcés in 1776 and Jedediah Smith in 1826. The old Indian trail then continued south over the crest of the San Bernardinos, but since Armijo mentions crossing the mountains via “Cañon de San Bernardino,” it appears plausible that his caravan turned west up Horsethief Canyon and crossed the easternmost notch of Cajon Summit. (Cajon Pass is not a single pass in the true sense of the word; instead it is a long undulating ridge with a number of shallow notches.) In any event, Armijo and his pack train surmounted the pass on January 28, 1830 and descended Cañon de San Bernardino (Cajon Canyon) to reach the verdant San Bernardino Valley, where they rested a day before traveling west to Los Angeles.

Armijo’s pioneering journey required



(Map from the author's collection)

eighty-six days of hard travel. Succeeding annual trade caravans covered the distance in less time as the route was adjusted and became familiar. It is evident that the trail section from the upper Mojave River to Cajon Pass changed, perhaps several times, over the two decades that the Santa Fe-Los Angeles trade caravans used it. High desert historian John Swisher believes that at some point in time, possibly in the early 1830s, the Old Spanish Trail left the river just downstream from the “Upper Narrows,” in today’s Victorville, and headed southwest up Oro Grande Wash. “The narrow and twisting wash was ideal for hoofed mules, who favored trekking on the soft sand rather than the rocky, rutted desert terrain,” writes Swisher. [2]



**Desert
Historian
John Swisher
looking up
Oro Grande
Wash
toward
Cajon Pass**

*Photograph courtesy
of John W. Robinson.*

The evidence is conclusive that later Santa Fe-Los Angeles caravans, anxious to reach their destination near the end of an exhausting trip, took the shortest route from the Mojave River to Cajon Pass by leaving the desert watercourse at what became known as the "Upper Crossing," later Lane's Crossing, a mile upriver from today's small community of Oro Grande, and headed south-southwest across Baldy Mesa to the pass. John C. Fremont described this route on his Second Expedition in 1844. Fremont left the San Joaquin Valley via Old Tehachapi (Oak Creek) Pass and traveled southeast across Antelope Valley to the northern base of the San Gabriel Mountains. He moved eastward

"close along the mountain" and struck the Old Spanish Trail a few miles north of Cajon Pass. On April 20, 1844 he wrote: "After a difficult march of 18 miles, a general shout announced that we had struck the object of our search - THE SPANISH TRAIL - which here was running directly north." [3] Fremont and his men turned north on the trail and reached the Mojave River in fifteen miles.

Some speculate that Fremont reached the Mojave twelve miles farther downstream at the "Lower Crossing," near present-day Helendale. This would jibe more closely with Fremont's statement that the trail ran "directly north." (To reach the "Upper

Crossing" would have required a north-northeasterly bearing). Maps today show a "Fremont Wash" on the west side of the river near Helendale. However, later accounts of travelers from Salt Lake City who followed the Old Spanish Trail from central Utah to San Bernardino make it clear that the trail, in its later years, forded the Mojave River at "Upper Crossing." And Fremont's "directly north" bearing can be explained by his use of magnetic north, which veered about 15 degrees east of true north.

So it is evident that whatever route from the upper Mojave River to Cajon Pass was used by early travelers, later trade caravans and emigrants - by 1844 and probably a few years before that - used the most direct route, leaving the river at Upper, or Lane's Crossing and heading south-southwest up the Joshua Tree-dotted incline of Baldy Mesa to East Cajon Summit.

Endnotes.

- [1] Leroy R. and Ann W. Hafen, *Old Spanish Trail: Santa Fe to Los Angeles* (Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1954), pp. 165-169.
- [2] John M. Swisher, *Bits 'N Pieces of the Mohave Desert's Weathered Past* (Hesperia, CA; privately printed, 1995), pp. 171-172.
- [3] Donald Jackson and Mary Lee Spence, *The Expeditions of John Charles Fremont, Vol. 1, Travels from 1838 to 1844* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), p. 674.



Postcards, courtesy of the author, showing the Mojave River near Victorville, California and...



Highway U.S. Route 66 over Cajon Pass in the 1940s with San Gabriel Mountains behind.

CAJON PASS:

Gateway to Southern California

by Nicholas R. Cataldo

Thousands of Southern California motorists travel along Interstate 15 through the Cajon Pass each day. Most of them see this corridor which bridges the Mojave Desert with the San Bernardino Valley as nothing more than a necessary evil potentially slowing them down as they hurry home from work or on their way to make a killing in Las Vegas.

What they don't realize is that the pass is not only a portal to their immediate destination, but to a

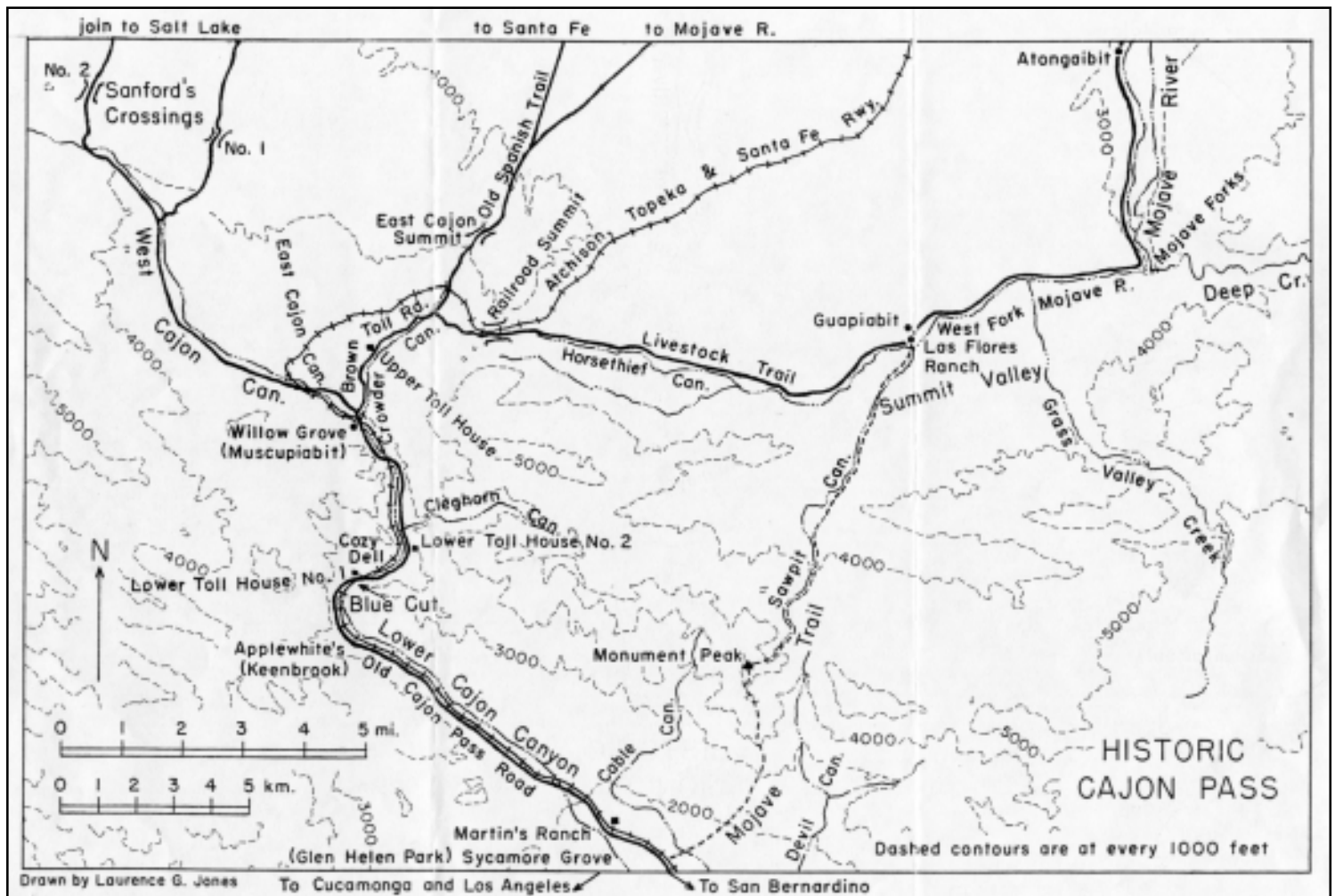
journey back to Southern California's rip-roaring past as well.

Wedged tightly between the San Gabriel and the San Bernardino mountain ranges, the Cajon Pass -- a culmination of several pathways twisting through a series of gaps and canyons -- has been an important gateway to Southern California since prehistoric times. Indians, explorers, trappers, loggers, land speculators, rail passengers, and early day motorists have all passed through the area

on their way to or from the desert.

The first known use of this "gateway" began long before the arrival of the white man when an old Indian trail connecting a string of villages stretched all the way from the upper Mojave Desert, through Summit Valley and Crowder Canyon, and then through Cajon Canyon. [1]

When Father Jose Maria Zalvidea made a trip from Santa Barbara to San Gabriel looking for possible sites for future missions in 1806, he stopped at a Serrano Indian village in the Cajon Pass called *Amoscopiabit*, which was located near today's Cal Trans south-bound truck scales at the junction of Inter-



Map provided courtesy of authors John W. Robinson and Nicholas R. Cataldo.

state 15 and Highway 138. Father Zalvidea noted in his diary of seeing 15 to 18 wild Indians and some little ones.” And while there, he baptized two old women. One he named Francesca and the other, Ambrosia. [2]

Before his journey through the pass was over, the padre described an uninhabited Indian settlement later to be named *Santisma Trinidad* -- near what is now the community of Devore. [3,4]

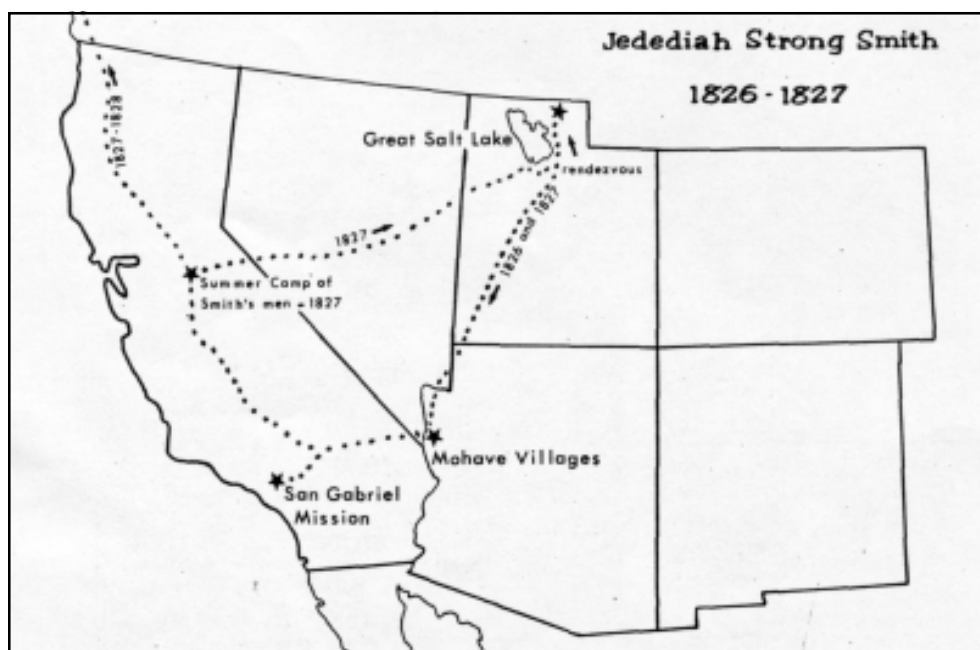
The next documented visit in the area was in 1827 when twenty-nine-year-old Jedediah Smith followed this route on his second visit to California with the remnant of his fur trading party who narrowly escaped a Mohave attack while crossing the Colorado River near present-day Needles.

After following the Mojave River to what is now Oro Grande, the men struck directly south through a gap they could see in the mountains. Down they came along the Indian trail through Crowder Canyon Narrows to Cajon Canyon before stopping in San Bernardino where the starving men killed three of the San Gabriel Mission herd of cattle. [5]

During the 1830s and 40s long pack trains of mules led by men like Ewing Young and William Wolfskill, making their way between Santa Fe and Los Angeles followed this route which had become known as *The Old Spanish Trail*.

Working their way through this twisting, agonizing passage, the mule train caravans closely followed the footsteps of the fur trapping party of Jedediah Smith as well as that of legendary trail-blazer and scout, Kit Carson, two years later.

Clomping through the Cajon Pass -- known at the time as “El Cajon de los Mexicanos” -- before arriving in



Map courtesy of author.

Los Angeles during the fall, these traders brought blankets and manufactured goods from New Mexico to be exchanged for southern California's much prized horses and mules. Then, after the transaction of goods at the annual spring rendezvous site in what is now Colton, they departed for New Mexico along what has been often called “the longest, crookedest, most arduous pack mule route in the history of America.” [6]

Some of these New Mexican traders eventually made the San Bernardino Valley their home. One such group of colonists was led by Antonio Martinez and Lorenzo Trujillo who helped establish the community of Agua Mansa (now part of Colton) -- eventually to become the largest town between Santa Fe and Los Angeles. [7]

During the late 1840s, the old caravan trail also became known as *The Salt Lake Trail* as emigrant parties departing from Salt Lake rolled slowly along the Cajon. However, not before many of their wagons had to be dismantled and

dragged over the rocky stream bed which runs through the Crowder Canyon Narrows. One such caravan was the Jefferson Hunt party (those members who did not take the “short cut” through Death Valley) who were bound for the gold fields of northern California. [8]

Throughout this period, bands of horse thieves led by a notorious Ute Indian Chief named Walkara, along with American renegades like Thomas “Pegleg” Smith and Jim Beckwourth, came through the pass bent on raiding Mexican ranchos all over southern California. The stolen horses were then driven over the desert to Utah and New Mexico.

In fact, during the early part of 1840, these three men planned a massive horse-stealing raid conducted on one night in widely separated places ranging from San Luis Obispo to the Santa Ana River. Many of these stolen animals (some accounts estimate the number to be close to 5,000) were driven through the remote canyons in the Cajon Pass. One of these canyons where the outlaws came through attained the

dubious distinction of being called "Horse Thief Canyon." [9]

The next major group of travelers to ramble through the pass was a wagon train made up of 437 Mormons from Salt Lake City who were destined to develop the future city of San Bernardino in 1851. This caravan followed the Salt Lake Trail as far as Baldy Mesa before detouring through the West Cajon Canyon after hearing about a longer, but less arduous route developed a year earlier by a Banning teamster named William T. Sanford. Sanford's route was smoother than the trail through the "Narrows." However, it was seven miles longer and so steep at one point that wagons had to be lowered with ropes.

The first bona fide wagon road through the Cajon Pass finally came about when a mountain-man-turned-businessman named John Brown, saw the increasing volume of wagon traffic through the pass. With two partners in 1861, he took out a 20 year franchise from the state of California to build and maintain a

toll road. Brown chose the old Salt Lake route through the Crowder Canyon Narrows, but instead of dealing with the rocky stream bed that the frustrated Hunt party barely managed, he built his road higher up on the side of the canyon. [10]

***Modern explorers on I-15
are on an old Native
American route which suc-
cessively became the Old Spanish
Trail, Brown's Toll Road, the
National Old Trails Highway,
and U.S. Route 66.***

As the city of San Bernardino became prominent as a supply, freighting, and transportation center, a stage line and freight wagon company was established during the mid-1870s by the Meyerstein Brothers that hauled supplies by way of Brown's road to the flourishing Panamint mining district out in the desert. [11]

By the 1880s the many people (some of whom were victimized by real estate scams) coming from the East coast to Southern California caused fierce competition between railroads seeking access from the east to southern California and its seaports. Before long, the California Southern Railroad (soon to be taken over by the Santa Fe and now known as the Burlington-Northern Santa Fe) made its way through Cajon Pass using a route that closely approximated that of the old trails with shorter travel times. [12]

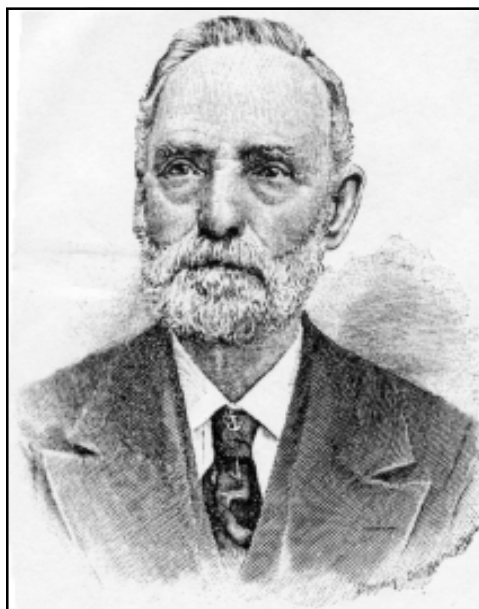
After the Brown toll road expired,

this forerunner to the modern-day freeway was taken over by the county of San Bernardino. By 1915 the old route was paved for automobiles and became part of The *National Old Trails Highway*. [13]

Then, beginning in 1926 when U.S. Route 66 was established, the new highway closely followed those earlier routes. Over the years, the "Mother Road," as author John Steinbeck called it, carried millions of travelers over the Cajon Pass until today's Interstate 15 opened during the 1960's.

Endnotes.

- [1] Arda M. Haenszel, Oral interview with the San Bernardino County Historian. June, 1995.
- [2] Diary of Father Jose Maria Zalvidea-- August 13, 1806 (translated by George W. Beattie).
- [3] Ibid. -- August 13, 1806
- [4] Arda M. Haenszel, "The Lost Rancheria in Cajon Pass," (pamphlet), p. 59.
- [5] George William and Helen Pruitt Beattie, *Heritage of the Valley: San Bernardino's First Century* (Pasadena: San Pasqual Press, 1939), p. 23.
- [6] Ibid., p. 37.
- [7] Dr. R. Bruce Harley, "The Agua Mansa History Trail," San Bernardino County Museum Association. Quarterly, 43(3), Summer, 1996.
- [8] Santa Fe Magazine (1914), p.30
- [9] Paul Bailey, *Walkara, Hawk of the Mountains* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1954).
- [10] Beattie and Beattie, Op. Cit., p. 337.
- [11] W.W. Robinson, *Story of San Bernardino County* (1958) p. 36.
- [12] Chard L. Walker, *Railroading through Cajon Pass*, pp. 3-7.
- [13] John M. Swisher, *Bits 'N Pieces of the Mohave Desert's Weathered Past* (Hesperia, privately printed, 1995), p. 104.



John Brown

Engraving courtesy of the author

Agua Mansa:

First California Town

on the Old Spanish

Trail

by *Dr. R. Bruce Harley*

The Old Spanish Trail, once established as a reliable connection between the terminus of the Santa Fe and Chihuahua trails at Santa Fe and a Pacific coast shipping center at Los Angeles, was primarily a trade route between two widely separated outposts of the Mexican republic created in 1821.

In addition to the annual trade caravans between 1829 and 1848 over the route, occasional settlers before 1840 accompanied the traders and settled in the Los Angeles area or north of it. However, none of these people such as William Wolfskill in 1830-1831 or William Pope in 1837 founded a new settlement. The largest of these settler groups was the Rowland-Workman Party of 1841, but again no new town was established.

However, that group did have a family from Abiquiu, NM which settled near present-day San Bernardino, a short distance south of the Old Spanish Trail. The head of this family was Lorenzo Trujillo, who settled near an 1840 Abiquiu emigrant family at the pueblo of Politana established by Hipolito Espinosa. Another Abiquiu emigrant



The Agua Mansa Cemetery, Jensen-Alvarado family graves.

Photograph courtesy of C.W. Querfeld, 1998.

was Santiago Martinez who had arrived in 1838.

The latter's presence stemmed from a group of men at Abiquiu proceeding with the caravan of that year to ascertain a favorable location for a potential group to settle in a milder climate. Trujillo, who had wide acquaintanceship with traders and fur trappers, had already talked to Isaac Slover and Louis Robidoux about their impressions of the Santa Ana River valley from trade expeditions before 1838.

In 1838, Trujillo, Espinoza, Martinez and several others accompanied that year's caravan to Rancho San Bernardino then in the process of being taken over by Antonio Lugo and his sons. Martinez, his wife, Manuelita Renaga, and their newborn son, Apolinario, born on the trail (possibly) at Resting Springs near the Nevada-California border, decided to settle on the rancho immediately.

The others wintered in the valley and helped traders to organize a large herd of horses and mules for the return trip to New Mexico in 1839. Espinoza also decided after a year to move to Lugo's rancho. The following year, in 1841, the Trujillo family moved with the Rowland-Workman Party. Upon arrival, it negotiated with the Lugo family. In exchange for occupying 2200 acres at Politana as a colonized settlement, the pioneers were to provide protection against Indian danger and Old Spanish Trail associated horse and mule thievery. If needed, vaquero duties were also expected.

Trujillo and Espinoza thereupon returned to Abiquiu in the spring of 1842 to assist a number of emigrating families in making the move to California by pack mule over a 1200-mile trail. About a third of the prospective families were ready to go that year. The others accompanied the trade caravans in 1843 and 1844.



The Trujillo Adobe Riverside County Historic site.

Photographs courtesy of C. W. Querfeld, 1998.



Politana site. This was the destination of the 1842 colonizing group of 12 Abiquiu families totaling forty individuals.

The 1842 group consisted of the leaders and a dozen families totaling about 40 individuals. Aside from Trujillo and Espinoza, none of the others had been on the Old Spanish Trail.

The group left Abiquiu in August 1842 and arrived without any major mishaps on November 8. The people immediately built adobe homes at the Politana pueblo while awaiting the arrival of about 75 more people from at least another 20 families. Some of the later families came from Taos (Isaac Slover) and from Santa Fe (Louis Robidoux).

In the spring of 1844, however, the Politana colony had a falling-out with the Lugo family over careless horsemen breaking down fences and trampling over crops and irrigation banks. Trujillo then negotiated with Juan Bandini, owner of the Rancho Jurupa just southwest of the Lugo spread. Instead of a community land grant still owned by the ranchero as with Lugo, the colonist families were given their own plot of ground along the Santa Ana River about

four miles downstream from Lugo's rancho in exchange for the same duties of protecting the area from sundry thieves and marauders. When the third contingent of colonists arrived in the fall of 1844, they were directed to settle at the new community now called Agua Mansa.

By the early 1850s, under the leadership of Don Trujillo and Ignacio Moya as alcalde, the village took on the characteristics of a transplanted New Mexico town featuring a Catholic parish and its church, a resident priest, a cemetery, and a school. The village had participation on the Los Angeles County board of supervisors and its own voting precinct. Before the arrival of the Mormons from Salt Lake City in 1851, Agua Mansa agriculture flourished so well that produce was sold at the Los Angeles marketplace. The location also continued to serve the needs of the Old Spanish Trail in supporting caravan traffic.

However, this idyllic location, even though sometimes referred to by Americans as an "Eden," was not

***Editor's Note:** In the Fall of 1998, although vacant, this historical Politana site displayed a for sale sign (commercial use).*

destined to exist very long in the California spirit of expansion. A devastating flood in 1862 destroyed everything but the church, cemetery and one house. Although rebuilt, the village never flourished thereafter and disintegrated after the church was abandoned in 1878. Church records were maintained by the parish in San Bernardino for a time, but the books were closed in 1893.

Agua Mansa, the only settlement between Abiquiu and Los Angeles on the Old Spanish Trail, thus played a vital but brief role as a forerunner of America's Manifest Destiny in the westward movement.

Further reading of Dr. Harley's works...

[1] Dr. R. Bruce Harley, "The Agua Mansa History Trail," San Bernardino County Museum Association. Quarterly, 43(3), Summer, 1996.

[2] Dr. R. Bruce Harley, The Story of Agua Mansa: Its Settlement, Churches and People, First Community in San Bernardino Valley 1842-1893. (Diocese of San Bernardino Archives, 1998).

Book Reviews

California Desert Miracle: The Fight for Desert Parks and Wilderness. By Frank Wheat. (*San Diego: Sunbelt Publications, Inc., 1999, xxix + 337 pp. Map, bibliography, index. \$14.95*)

The California desert sprawls over almost a quarter of the state. For those who pause to sample its delights, it is a stark world of enchanting beauty. The seemingly endless landscapes, the soft hues that change with the time of day, the magnificent sunrises and sunsets, the flowering cacti, sage aromatic after a spring rain - all give the desert a mystique of its own.

The desert's life forms - both plant and animal - have superbly adapted to the land's sparse rainfall and temperature extremes. The ability of these hardy living things to flourish in a seemingly hostile environment is one of the wonders of nature.

There is paradox here. The desert is both hardy and vulnerable. What has evolved over centuries can—and has been—ravaged by thoughtless humans. Witness the tracks made by Patton's tanks in training exercises more than half a century ago. More recently, and far more devastating because of sheer numbers, the agents of destruction have been motorcycles and ORVs, running rampant over large sections of the desert's landscape. The Barstow to Las Vegas race, which began with 650 motorcyclists in 1967, grew to more than 3,000 riders in the early '70s.

Fortunately, there are those who love the desert in its natural state and are willing to work tirelessly to protect it. Their task was not easy. Many were the frustrating delays and setbacks along the way. It required all the grit and dogged determination these desert defenders possessed to finally see the "miracle" come about. This

twenty-seven year struggle to achieve passage of the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 is the crux of Frank Wheat's book.

This is an epic with many heroes, and Wheat's work is a chronicle of their efforts. First to voice concern about the substantial damage caused by the motorcycle races was Russ Penny, state director of the BLM, in 1967. Thanks to Penny's initiative, The California Desert: A Preliminary Study was completed in 1968. This first ever desert environmental study called for a complete plan to protect the desert. The first congressional bill for desert protection, based largely on Penny's report, was defeated in 1971.

Early efforts toward desert preservation suffered more from apathy than opposition, but this was to change as more substantial campaigns were initiated. Strong opposition to any desert protection bill came largely from ORV groups, mining interests, some desert residents, and congressmen whose districts encompassed much of the desert. The Sierra Club entered the fray in 1970 and soon became the leading proponent of desert protection. Wheat details the volunteer efforts of dedicated Club members such as Bill Holden, Lyle Gaston, James Dodson, Eldon Hughes, and Judy Anderson, plus a host of others. Senator Allen Cranston became a leading ally in working for a desert protection bill.

The 1970s and '80s were years that saw a succession of delays and moves forward, victories and defeats, elation and frustration. Every effort to get a desert protection bill through Congress failed, and desert defenders learned first hand how incredibly difficult it is to get protective legislation through Congress, where economic self-interest so often predominates. Probably the best forward move during this period was passage of the Federal Land Policy and

Management Act of 1976, which called for the BLM to study lands under its jurisdiction that might possess wilderness value. Another forward step, in 1984, was the formation of the California Desert Protection League, a coalition of all the organizations supporting desert protection.

The climax of the multi-year effort to preserve the California desert took place in 1994, in what Frank Wheat calls "The Miracle." The intricacies of political give and take are fully illustrated here, with intense lobbying, public hearings, amendments approved or rejected, compromises, political "horse trading," and threats of filibuster. (Reading this chapter is a lesson in civics.) The cause for desert protection was greatly aided by California's two senators elected in 1992—Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer.

The California Desert Protection Bill finally passed the House but appeared to be stymied in the Senate, where Malcom Wallop of Idaho led the opposition and was prepared to kill it by filibuster. The final adjournment of the 103rd Congress loomed on Friday, October 7, with members anxious to return home to campaign for reelection. Out of deference to retiring Senator George Mitchell of Maine, who was respected by all sides, a one day extension was approved by the Senate leadership. But could the sixty votes needed for cloture be obtained? It seemed doubtful. Amid intense discussions, some senators who had previously opposed the desert bill broke ranks with their party. Cloture passed without a single vote to spare! The "miracle" had happened.

President Bill Clinton signed the California Desert Protection Act into law on October 31, 1994. Created was the Mojave National Preserve and two national parks—Death

Valley and Joshua Tree—previously national monuments. Sixty-nine small desert wilderness areas were set aside.

One might think this account of the long campaign for California desert protection would make for tedious reading. Not so. Frank Wheat writes well and weaves an insightful and fascinating narrative of the 27-year struggle. Southern California's premier historian Doyce Nunis calls this "environmental history at its superbly crafted best." California Desert Miracle is a rich treat for those of us who treasure the state's unspoiled wildlands.

Reviewed by John Robinson
Fullerton, California

El Camino Real from Mexico City to Santa Fe. Photographs by Christine Preston. Text by Douglas Preston and José Antonio Esquibel. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998, ix + 178 pp. Photographs, appendix, maps. \$55 cloth. \$26.95 paper)

I first saw many of the stunning photographs in this book on display in the Palace of Governors in Santa Fe during the annual Old Spanish Trail Association meeting in May, 1998. As you open the book, you see La Bajada, the escarpment where the trail descended down to the Rio Grande valley from the plateau at Santa Fe, in such clarity, in such surreal colors, with such art, that you may even hold your breath in unconscious tribute, as I did. As you turn the pages you see example after example of great photography: a shot of three children playing, one girl posing coquettishly among the white rocks in the vast plain outside the poor mining town of Charcas, Mexico; another plate shows a flash flood across the Camino Real near Belen that seems to echo faint sounds of rocks clattering, sand hissing,

water roaring. At Lava Gate, you see ruts of the Camino Real in the Jornada del Muerto desert, ruts that appear at sunrise and fade away by midmorning.

Preston is an artist who knows her medium and achieves results that make the artist in the rest of us weep for joy and envy. She shows us what remains of the old trail and how the people and the places—especially the old churches—along it have survived. And finally, with her cityscapes, the views of the old ruined haciendas and the final image of traffic rushing into Santa Fe on Interstate 25 at night, you cannot help but feel melancholy from the loss of the old, slow ways of the culture that once existed along this once royal road.

In the first section of the book, Douglas Preston describes the pilgrimage he and his wife made along the Trail. They explored the trail, which he calls The Eternal Braided Trail, over 13,000 miles by car, 350 miles by horseback and a few hundred on foot. They camped along eight hundred miles of it, often on the same parajes—campsites—where the Spaniards camped. He takes us on a trek beginning at Mexico City and ending at Santa Fe. There is a journal character to the writing, an excellent technique to describe their travels: the Trail as it is and as it once was, some history regarding the places along it and descriptions of their encounters with the people and places along the Trail. Treasure especially the opening scene on the Jornada del Muerto that is captured so well in one of Christine Preston's marvelous photographs.

A picture of Oñate emerges: rich, impatient, imperious and yet competent to a degree rare then as well as today. After Oñate received his contract and organized his expedition, years passed while he suffered through bureaucratic delays and insufferable inspectors until his

expedition dwindled by nearly tenfold. At last, when they received permission to proceed, they hastened northward. After four days, they reached the Río Conchos.

"...The river was in full flood, and the expedition feared to cross until Oñate, in a marvelous display of Spanish *brío*, plunged into the thundering river on his horse, rode it to the far bank, and then turned around and rode back."

Spend a quiet afternoon with this book, perhaps outside in the shade on a Sunday. It is worth quality time. First, look at the photographs, then read Douglas Preston's essay, then look at the photos again. When you are immersed in the Royal Road and the Preston's pilgrimage, turn to the back where the publisher has placed José Antonio Esquibel's Genealogical Appendix. Here is much original work. Esquibel's genealogical research into the families of New Mexico who traveled up The Royal Road has clarified the origins of many of the old families of New Mexico. For instance, of the first wave of Spanish colonists who arrived with Oñate in 1596, Esquibel has found sixteen family names that are still in New Mexico today. A second wave of colonists came to strengthen the small colony in 1630 and Esquibel counts five more family names that have survived: Baca, Chávez, Herrera, Holguín/Olguín, and Montoya.

Then came the Pueblo Revolt in 1680 that took most of the non-Indian people up and down the Rio Grande by surprise. Nearly all the Pueblo people took up the cause. Many of the non-Indian people were killed or taken prisoner. The Camino Real became a life-saving escape route for the survivors of the revolt. Many of those who fled were Pueblo Indian allies of the Spanish. Most of the who escaped established themselves

along the Rio Grande in the El Paso region. As the years dragged on while the government of New Spain organized an expedition to retake the colony, many of them drifted back to their original homelands in Mexico.

When Diego de Vargas regained New Mexico in 1693, those who still remained along the Rio Grande returned with him to their former homes. Because he had been forced to recruit more colonists in Mexico City, many more than the remaining original colonists accompanied him. In all, seventy families, about eight hundred people, arrived with Vargas in the plaza of Santa Fe in December 1693. Esquibel has identified eight new family names from this group to be added to those still found in New Mexico. After Vargas, wave after wave of colonists, many of them soldiers with their families, arrived in New Mexico. I counted 79 family names Esquibel has identified as dating from the period 1697 until 1821, when his research ends. He has traced many of these families back to their origins in Spain, northern Europe, the Mediterranean, and even Crete. Some had intermarried with the Indian allies of Cortés.

It is interesting to learn when and how the founding families came to New Mexico. Then, too, for those of us who are interested in the Old Spanish Trail, the descendants of these early colonists were the traders and immigrants who traveled up the north and east branches of the Old Spanish Trail and who later made their way along the main branch of the Old Spanish Trail to trade with the settlements in and around present day Los Angeles.

This is a generous book, full of information, stories, poetry and visual delights. There are few books on El Camino Real itself and this

one stands to be a major addition, particularly through the photographs and the genealogical research.

Reviewed by John Coffman
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Migrants West: Toward the Southern California Frontier. By Ronald

C. Woolsey. (*Sebastopol, CA: Grizzly Bear Publishing Co., 1996. 221 pp. Maps, photos, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95*)

OSTA member Ronald Woolsey has written a superb study of Southern California during its turbulent transition from the Mexican "Californio" era to the early period of American dominance, roughly from the 1840s into the 1870s. He has accomplished this through vignettes of twelve leading Southern California citizens who collectively characterize this stormy era of social and economic change. All of the major issues that confronted this changing society are touched upon by Woolsey. The chapter on Abel Stearns, Massachusetts-born Yankee trader who came to California in 1829 and soon thereafter became a leading businessman and land owner, illustrates the commercial climate of mid-19th century Southern California. Hugo Reid, a Scotsman who arrived in 1832 and like Stearns married into a Californio family, is well covered in a fascinating vignette. Reid is most remembered for his written portrayal of the sorry state of Southern California Indians. Margaret Hereford Wilson, wife of pioneer settler and first Anglo mayor of Los Angeles Benjamin Wilson, illustrates a woman's role in a male-dominated society.

Profiles of Sheriff James Barton and outlaw Juan Flores reveal the stresses between the Anglo and

Hispanic-speaking cultures. Rifts of the Civil War era are revealed in the chapters on lawyer Joseph Lancaster Brent, newspaperman Henry Hamilton, and fire-eating orator and politician Edward J. C. Kewen. The vignette on entrepreneur Charles Ducommun exemplifies the Los Angeles business boom of the late 1860s and '70s. The advent of Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence is well illustrated in the profile of Judge Benjamin Hayes. A romantic portrayal of a bygone rancho era is found in the chapter on Don Antonio Coronel and the *Ramona* myth.

These and other vignettes are majestically woven together, rewarding the reader with an insightful chronicle of the birth and early development of multi-cultural Southern California.

Reviewed by John W. Robinson
Fullerton, California

San Bernardino: The Rise and Fall of a California Community. By

Edward Leo Lyman. (*Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996. 469 pp. Maps, photos, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95*)

In March 1851 a company of some 500 Mormon colonists, led by church apostles Amasa Lyman and Charles Rich and guided by wagonmaster Jefferson Hunt, departed Salt Lake City bound for Southern California. The caravan followed the western portion of the Old Spanish Trail "through sandy or rocky country, heartbreaking grades" and over "long dry stretches where scarcity of food and drink for the animals" threatened disaster. Early in June 1851 the weary Mormons crossed Cajon Pass and set up camp in lower Cajon Canyon. After a failed attempt to buy Rancho Santa Ana del Chino from owner Isaac Williams, Lyman and Rich successfully negotiated with the Lugo

family to purchase a large portion of Rancho San Bernardino. The Mormons chose a mile-square inclined plain two miles east of lower Cajon Creek for their town, which they named San Bernardino. The industrious Latter-Day Saints set to work immediately to build a community from scratch. Thus was born one of Southern California's major population centers.

Through perseverance and hard work, Mormon San Bernardino prospered for several years. Lumber hauled down from the nearby San Bernardino Mountains and wheat grown on the plain became the economic mainstays, with Los Angeles buying all the Mormons could supply.

It was too good to last. The Mormon Era in San Bernardino history came

to an abrupt end in the fall of 1857, when church leader Brigham Young recalled his faithful to Salt Lake City. The ostensible reason for the recall was the Federal Government's dispute with the Mormons, which resulted in President James Buchanan dispatching the U. S. Army to Utah in September 1857. More recent scholarship suggests there were other reasons contributing to the recall of the San Bernardino Mormons. Brigham Young and others of the Mormon hierarchy were disturbed by reports of dissension and moral decline among the San Bernardino brethren. "Intemperance and vice are steadily gaining ground in this place," reported a church leader. Young himself was quoted as saying, "Hell reigns there," and reportedly had written off the colony as a failure as early as

April 1857, several months before the Federal threat to Utah developed. Most, but not all, of the San Bernardino Mormons heeded their leader's call and returned to Utah.

Edward Leo Lyman, college professor and descendent of apostle Amasa Lyman, covers all this in an exhaustive, thoroughly researched study of the short-lived Mormon community. It would be safe to say that his work is definitive. Lyman writes well and his book is highly recommended to all those with an interest in Mormon and/or Southern California history.

Reviewed by John W. Robinson
Fullerton, California

We need your help!

Dr. Bill Mader, Administrator of the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve in St. George, Utah, is looking for OSTA members who might be able to help decipher the two inscriptions pictured here. The Red Cliffs Desert Reserve staff would welcome researched opinions. The general area is north of St. George, Utah. The date precedes the Dominguez-Escalante expedition by two years. Dr. Mader tells us they have "no clue how old the carvings are, but judging from their weathered appearance they could be one or more centuries." He's especially interested in finding if the carvings match any known others elsewhere in the Southwest. If you can be of help to Dr. Mader, please contact him at the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve, 197 East Tabernacle, St. George, UT 84770, (435) 634-5756, mader@infowest.com.



Annual Meeting -- continued from page 1

partnerships with federal and state agencies.

The Silverton Hotel/Casino/RV Park at 3333 Blue Diamond Road in Las Vegas will serve as the June 5 site of the day-long program session, the evening reception, and the annual association business meeting. The Silverton is only minutes away from the glitter of the Strip, but it provides ready access to the trail route.

On Sunday, June 6, a full-day field trip is planned, in comfortable style, using an air-conditioned bus with bathroom facilities. Due to the nature of the field trip, private vehicles cannot be accommodated. Included in the tour will be the Big Springs, the Mormon Fort, Armijo's route across the Las Vegas Valley, Cottonwood Springs, historic Goodsprings Road, and Mountain Springs Pass. An optional tour for private vehicles to more remote sites will be offered on June 7.

Full conference details and registration material will be mailed to you mid-April.

Mark your calendars...

Dedication of "The Spirit of Pioneer Women" May 8 1:30 p.m.
Contact: Katherine Nelson (970) 241-8143 Grand Junction, CO

OSTA 1999 Conference June 5-7
Contact: Col. Hal Steiner (702) 458-1723 Las Vegas, NV

Annual Anza World Conference August 26-29
Contact: vistatr@amigo.net (719) 852-4786 Monte Vista, CO

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